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EDITORIALS.

—THE U. S. National Academy of Sciences has been in a state of paralysis for now two years in the matter of electing members, after having been unable to fill its vacancies for a considerably longer period. This is not due to the lack of suitable candidates, but rather owing to the impossibility of concentrating a sufficient number of votes on any one candidate to elect him. This is in turn due to the fact that there is a disproportionate number of members devoted to the physical sciences, as compared with those devoted to the natural sciences. In the present membership there are, according to a committee of the society, fifty-eight members devoted to the physical, and thirty-one members who represent the natural sciences. It is natural that under such circumstances, the members of the latter class should refuse to add to the members of the former class. It is true that of the seven candidates presented at the election which has just failed, four represented the natural, and three the physical sciences. But the gentlemen present who represent the physical sciences could not be prevailed on to elect an additional member of the division of natural sciences. This result is probably due to a want of concerted action, rather than to an intentional desire to continue the present disproportion between the classes. It is also due in part to the vote of members who do not attend the meetings, and who thus fail to receive information as to various points at issue. The preponderance of any one class naturally tends to perpetuate itself, and its effect is now so conspicuous that the necessity for some change in the mode of elections is obvious.

It is proposed to meet the difficulty by dividing the Academy into classes, each of which is to have a fixed membership, so that deficiencies may be known and filled. Such a system exists in the academies of most countries, and it materially aids in securing a just representation. The system should not, however, be too complex, since it is impossible to fix the correct proportion of membership of any of the special branches of science, which shall be always applicable. A few large divisions, whose cultivators for obvious reasons stand in a generally definite proportion to each other, or to the Academy, is about as much as is practicable in this direction. The committee already referred to, proposes that the Academy be divided into six classes, three of which embrace physical sciences, and two natural sciences, and one includes sciences which cannot be classed under either head. This

classification tends to perpetuate the disproportion already referred to; omits reference to some sciences; and makes no distinct division for applied science. We now refer to a letter addressed to the committee, which appears in the department of Scientific News this number of the *NATURALIST*, in which the following division is proposed: Class I.—Physical Sciences, 35 members; Class II.—Natural Sciences, 35 members; Class III.—Anthropological Sciences, 15 members; Class IV.—Applied Sciences, 15 members. The sciences included in each of these classes are enumerated in the letter in question.

—A bill has been recently introduced into Congress, providing for the establishment of a “National Academy” of twenty-five members. Of these Congress is to appoint the first five members, and these are to appoint the other twenty. These twenty-five are to represent “literature, science, fine arts and invention.” We understand that Gen. Lewis Wallace has drawn up the bill.

The sponsors of this project appear to be unaware of the existence of the National Academy of Sciences of one hundred possible members. They also display an extraordinary exclusiveness in entertaining the supposition that the departments of human effort mentioned in the bill can be properly represented by only twenty-five men. Taking the National Academy of Sciences for granted, it might be supposed that an Academy of Arts might be similarly constituted. In such a case, membership, as in the Academy of Sciences, would be awarded on account of original work done. Literature, Music and the Fine Arts would be encouraged by such an organization, were the qualifications for membership and the number of members strictly defined. The difficulty in doing this, and in applying the rules in the concrete, would be greater in the case of the arts, we apprehend, than in the case of the sciences. It is also quite probable that fifty names, rather than one hundred, would embrace the list available at the present time in this country.

It is hardly possible that the bill now before Congress can become a law in its present shape. The scientific element must be eliminated as being already provided for. The best literary men and artists of the country must decide whether such a body could be so constituted as to be truly representative of the best work or not. Geographical claims, so dear to the American heart, must be ignored in this matter, as it is in the Academy of Sciences; and the usual preference of most people for their friends will be an ever present difficulty to be met and overcome. On the whole, however, we suspect that such a body, properly

protected, would be an encouragement to original production in the arts, as the Academy of Sciences is to those engaged in the pursuit of scientific research.

—THE recent celebration at Jena, in commemoration of the sixtieth birthday of Professor Ernst Haeckel, was a deserved compliment to a great naturalist. The range of Professor Haeckel's work covers the three fields of usefulness possible to the naturalist, viz.: special work, generalization, and popularization. His well known researches on the Radiolaria, sponges, corals and Medusæ are monuments of industry and skill. His generalization of the phenomena of the earliest embryonic stages is the frame-work of embryology. His speculations as to the phylogeny of the Vertebrata have been often confirmed by paleontology. His delightful Travels in Ceylon have brought him before a wide and interested public.